

Book Review

Angiosperm Evolution - No abominable mystery.

A. D. J. Meeuse, 1992.

Eburon-Delft. CIP-Gegevens Koninklijke Bibliotheek, Den Haag. (Price?)

The evolution of angiosperms has always been a fascinating subject for botanists. During the past century, there have been many interesting theories and hypotheses, attempting to give plausible explanations of this, based on more and more modern data gathered from diverse fields. However, it is an irony that while 'modern' theories have been giving way to more modern ones, the 'classical' concept has so far survived the periodical onslaughts on it and is still found to be comparatively more acceptable by the vast majority of botanists.

The present book by Prof. Dr. Meeuse, the newest on the subject, is an abridged compilation of his many papers published during the past couple of decades in which he had tried to explain his views on the matter. Many reasons are pointed out here by the author to back up his surmises and conclusions, particularly for the assumed polyphyletic origin of the angiosperms and for his opinion that the angiosperm carpel is a direct derivative of cupule. His statements such as, the phytochemical approach should be given as much weight as those deduced

from other disciplines, would be challenged by no one.

The author states (p. 48) "It appears that the quest for angiosperm ancestors has ended and in any event there is certainly no longer an 'abominable mystery', but at the moment it is still impossible to select the truly ancestral groups from the ample candidates". I would agree more whole-heartedly with the second half of this statement than with the first!

At more than one place in the book the author has expressed his feeling that his publications on this subject had not been given the serious attention due to them, by the botanical world in general. If this is at all true, my own suspicion is that the reading of them takes far more longer time and energy, than similar papers of equal length and is rather fatiguing, despite the good language.

The book, as such, definitely deserves the attention of those interested in the subject. It is, therefore, recommended to all who would like some serious reading on this challenging (not abominable!) mystery.